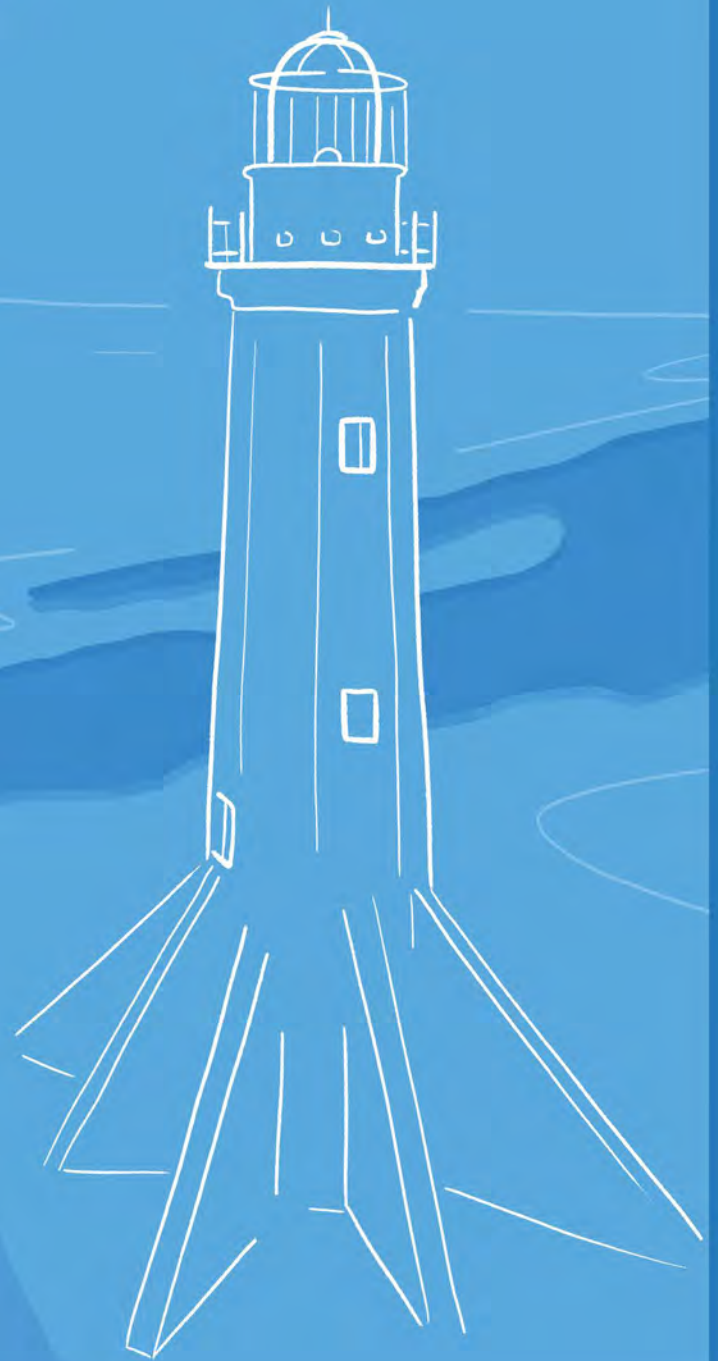


Cameron Parish, Louisiana

REDEVELOPMENT & REVISIONING PROJECT



Outdoor recreation and
nature-based tourism
recommendations

Hurricane Laura

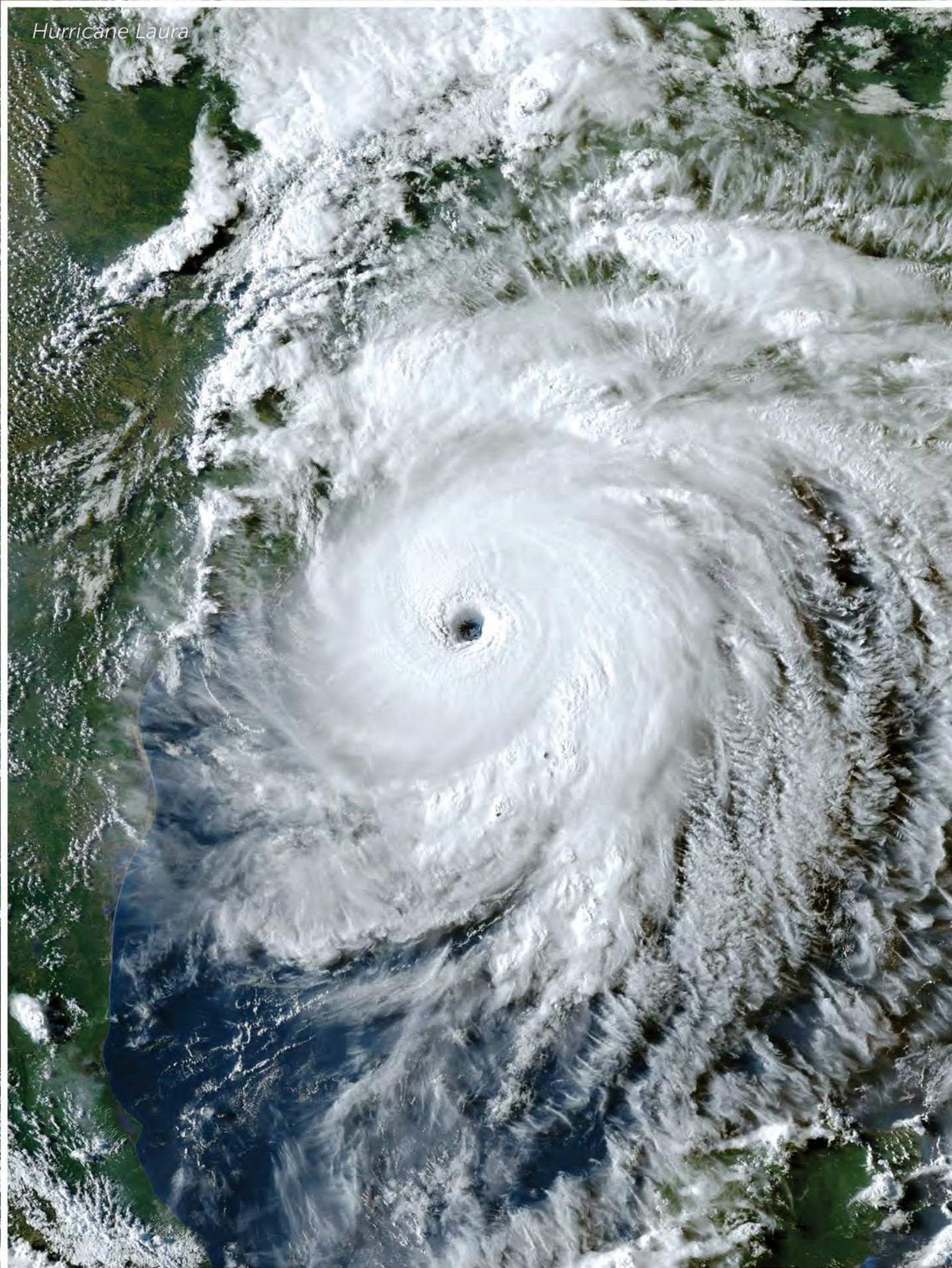


Photo: NOAA



FEMA



NPS-RTCA
Rivers, Trails and Conservation
Assistance Program



APRIL 2024

When the Category 4 hurricanes, Laura and Delta, swept through southwestern Louisiana in August and October of 2020, their high winds, heavy rains, and extensive flooding left a pattern of destruction across southwest Louisiana reaching more than 80 miles inland.

Showing the generational resiliency arising from the impacts of numerous storms, the disaster-impacted communities of DeRidder and Lake Charles, along with representatives of Calcasieu, Cameron, and Allen parishes, requested assistance from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) to help with the development of long-term recovery plans.

Working closely with local partners, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Park Service helped facilitate six southwest Louisiana community-led projects focused on natural and cultural resource conservation, outdoor recreation, and nature-based tourism.



Cameron
Preservation Alliance



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The resiliency that is part of the soul of Cameron Parish was tested again in 2020 when hurricanes Laura and Delta made landfall only six weeks apart and wrought havoc throughout the area. After the storms had passed, residents began rebuilding, facing tasks made even more difficult by the cumulative effects of the four major hurricanes that had come ashore since 2005.

With support from FEMA's Community Planning and Capacity Building Recovery Support Function (CPCB RSF), the Cameron Preservation Alliance requested technical assistance from NPS-RTCA to:

- ✓ Provide an objective assessment of Cameron Parish's outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism opportunities.
- ✓ Identify stakeholders and partners to help increase organizational capacity.
- ✓ Engage the community in the project through virtual and in-person meetings.
- ✓ Explore options for a more sustainable economy.

Taking advantage of the area's national wildlife refuges, year-round birding opportunities, unlimited paddling potential, exceptional saltwater and freshwater fishing, stargazing, and surfing possibilities, NPS-RTCA recommends:

- ➔ Establish a vision for Cameron Parish as an international destination for sustainable ecotourism.
- ➔ Form an Ecotourism Steering Committee to lead the effort.

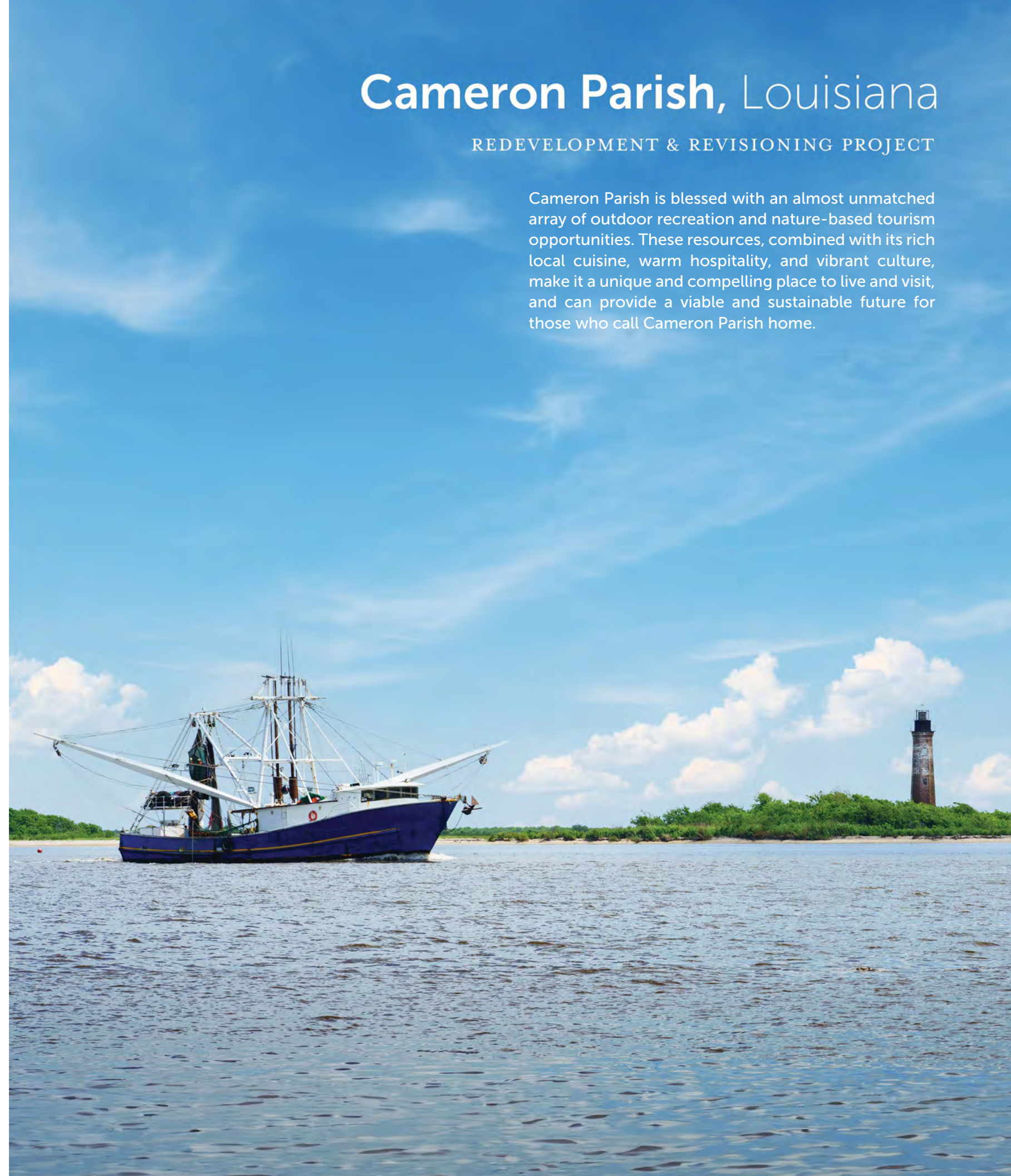
To help the parish turn this vision into reality, the National Park Service team developed the following initiatives:

- 1 Promote the Creole Nature Trail as the regional hub for ecotourism. It provides access to nearly all the parish's outdoor recreation and ecotourism opportunities.
- 2 Develop a greenway and blueway network between Cameron and Calcasieu parishes. Establish a partnership with those leading the Lake Charles Bayou Greenbelt project.
- 3 Improve and add access facilities and services to enhance ecotourism.
- 4 Market to the outdoor recreation and nature-based ecotourism communities as well as underserved neighborhoods in the area.
- 5 Enhance Cameron Parish's international reputation for birding.
- 6 Promote and publicize the conservation successes along the Gulf Coast. Show commitment to conservation and protection of the coastal environment.
- 7 Think big and fill in the blanks. Envision Cameron Parish as the keystone of two, new, national long-distance trails.
- 8 Strengthen place attachment for residents and those who have been displaced.

Cameron Parish, Louisiana

REDEVELOPMENT & REVISIONING PROJECT

Cameron Parish is blessed with an almost unmatched array of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism opportunities. These resources, combined with its rich local cuisine, warm hospitality, and vibrant culture, make it a unique and compelling place to live and visit, and can provide a viable and sustainable future for those who call Cameron Parish home.



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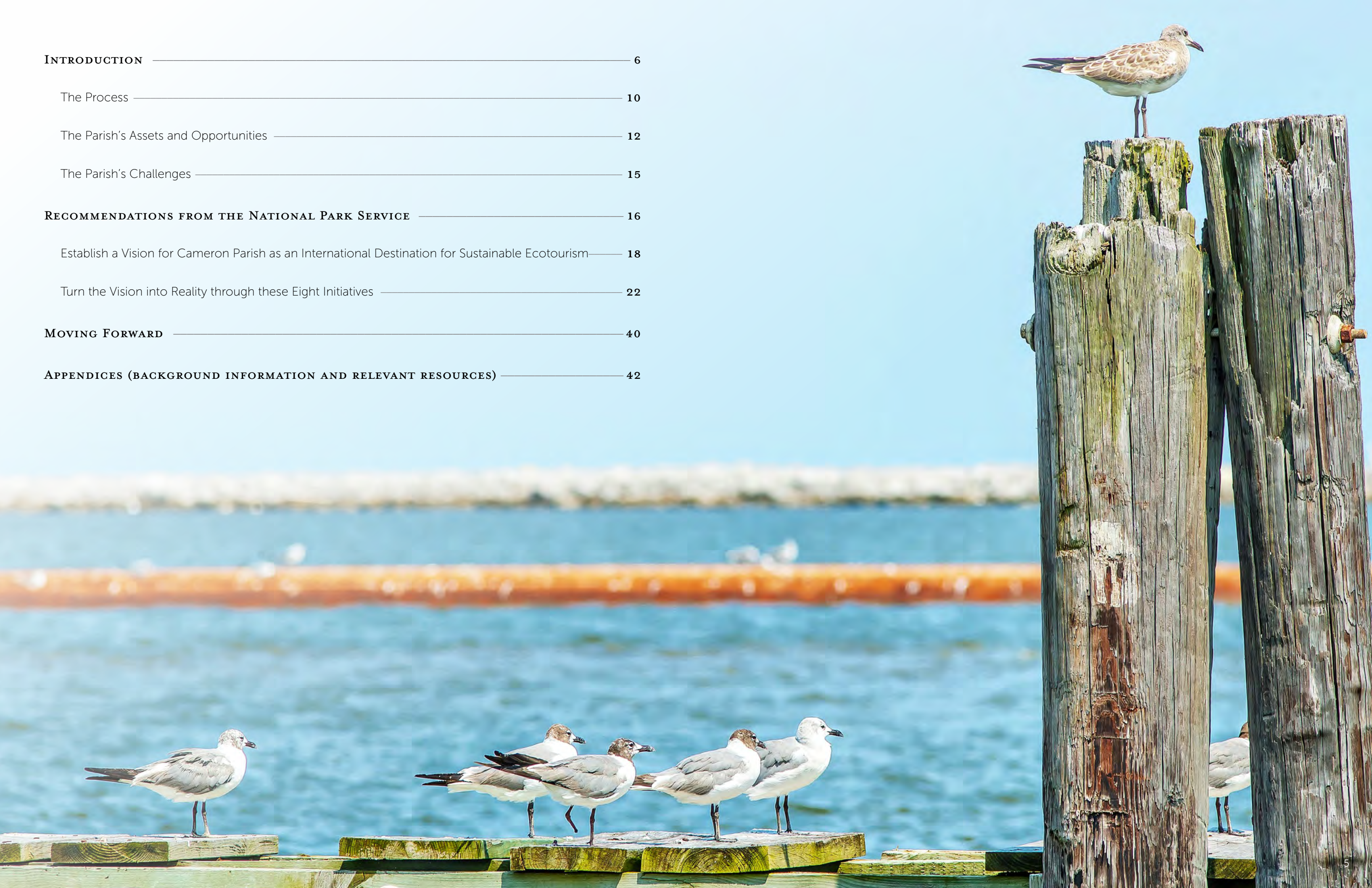
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INTRODUCTION

Cameron Parish was hit particularly hard when hurricanes Laura and Delta made landfall only six weeks apart in 2020. Embodying the resiliency of the area's residents, the Cameron Preservation Alliance requested technical assistance from the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program to:

- Assess Cameron Parish's nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities.
- Identify potential project partners and stakeholders.
- Engage parish residents.
- Help turn ideas and potential into a vision.
- Provide recommendations and relevant resources.
- Identify potential funding sources.

The cumulative impacts from hurricanes and tropical storms that devastated Cameron Parish over the years have resulted in a decline of community facilities and services, as well as in the parish's population. This encouraged the NPS-RTCA team to consider an additional focus for the project, one involving the enhancement and restoration of "place attachment" which is defined as the emotional bond between person and place, and is often related to parks, green spaces, and natural areas. The National Park Service team addressed this not only as it pertains to current parish residents, but also to those who have been displaced, as well.



The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects and assists communities with natural disaster recovery across the United States. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.



The Federal Emergency Management Agency Community Assistance Recovery Support Function (CARSF) enables local governments to effectively and efficiently carry out community-based recovery planning and management in a post-disaster environment. CARSF also supports state or territorial governments in developing programs of support for local recovery planning.

The Project Team



The Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana "connects people who care with causes that matter while enhancing the quality of life in Southwest Louisiana." Among many other regional efforts, the Community Foundation worked with Urban Design Associates to develop the "**Just Imagine... SWLA**" initiative, a 50-year resilience master plan featuring 11 catalytic projects for Calcasieu and Cameron parishes.

Cameron Preservation Alliance



The Cameron Preservation Alliance is working towards the restoration of the parish's historic Sabine Pass Lighthouse which has been abandoned since 1952.



Map courtesy of VisitLakeCharles



The Process

The National Park Service team toured the parish and conducted virtual meetings and online reviews to provide an objective assessment of current resources, challenges, and opportunities in the area. These efforts culminated in the development of this report which highlights recommendations and relevant resources that Cameron Parish can use to reach its potential for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism.

To gather public input, NPS-RTCA held virtual meetings to facilitate a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis (SWOT) for parish partners. The group included representatives from nonprofit organizations in the area, the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana, Cameron LNG, and members from local, parish, state, and federal government.

Participants shared their thoughts regarding the parish's strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities, and then prioritized them by voting on the most significant items in each category.

A summary of the SWOT Analysis found that partners and residents see the parish's combination of natural and outdoor recreation resources as their greatest strength. Mentioned specifically were the one state and three national wildlife refuges, 26 miles of public beaches along the Gulf Coast, and plenty of access to the area's waterways. Opportunities revolved around establishing an ecotourism hub and enhancing outdoor recreation spaces, embracing sustainability and resiliency, involving large landscape managers in planning, and developing grocery, retail, and visitor amenities to serve residents and attract visitors. Creating a mobile app to help visitors explore the parish was suggested, as well. Showing confidence in the future, the group sees great potential in engaging the area's youth and cultivating tomorrow's leaders.

The exercise also revealed a realistic acknowledgement of the challenges facing the parish, not only in dealing with the impacts of past storms but in planning for those in the future. The current lack of visitor amenities, population decline, and limited career opportunities were mentioned as significant weaknesses. The risks faced by developers, and the scarcity and high prices of land, are seen as threats to moving forward. The difficulties and increasing costs involved with obtaining insurance, coastal land loss and subsidence, and remaining hurricane debris at neglected properties are also seen as significant impediments to progress.

After completing the SWOT Analysis, the group participated in a Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Inventory. For this innovative exercise, the National Park Service team developed a customized legend and icons that were used by participants to identify their favorite Cameron Parish outdoor activities on an interactive map (as seen below). The result was a

content-rich, place-based inventory of 73 opportunity areas. The results of the SWOT Analysis and Outdoor Recreation Opportunities Inventory helped shape NPS-RTCA's recommendations. See Appendix A for the complete list of data from these exercises.

The National Park Service team participated alongside Urban Design Associates in the "Just Imagine SWLA" planning session hosted by the Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana. The planning process included a public meeting in March of 2022, and culminated in development of the [11 Catalytic Projects for SWLA](#).

Additionally, NPS-RTCA identified potential project partners and stakeholders, reviewed visitor flow counts for various locations on the Creole Nature Trail, and, with partner input, created two conceptual plans for improvements to boating and paddling access facilities on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and the Mermentau River (see Initiative #6).

The Parish's Assets and Opportunities

Location, location, location certainly applies to Cameron Parish! The work conducted by the National Park Service team revealed incredible potential for a parish-wide sustainable ecotourism initiative, taking advantage of the following resources:

- **Southwest Louisiana's iconic national wildlife refuges** (Rockefeller, Cameron Prairie, Lacassine, and Sabine) offer extraordinary opportunities for nature-based tourism. Wildlife refuges are key features in neighboring Jefferson County, Texas, and Vermilion Parish, Louisiana, as well. In fact, for 120 miles from High Island, Texas, to Pecan Island, Louisiana, there are nearly continuous wildlife refuge areas at or near the coast. The refuges attract birders from across the country and around the globe, visitors who are looking for diverse recreation and cultural opportunities to enhance their experience.
- **Water everywhere!** Southwest Louisiana often seems to be more water than land, featuring wide expanses of wetlands and marshes along with the Grand, Calcasieu, and Sabine lakes, as well as the Calcasieu, Mermentau, and Sabine rivers. The area's calm protected waterways are perfect for paddlers and paddleboarders.
- **The Gulf Coast** offers all the usual beach activities, along with great shelling, birding, and surf and deep-sea fishing opportunities. At night, the coast's dark skies provide wonderful spots for stargazing.
- **The Creole Nature Trail** is one of the parish's most significant resources, providing access to most of the areas and outdoor recreation opportunities outlined above as it winds through Cameron Parish and what is affectionately known as "Louisiana's Outback." Considered one of America's "Last Great Wildernesses," the Creole Nature Trail is home to a land of marshes, coastal wetlands, beaches, rivers, over 400 bird species, alligators, and rich Cajun culture. The 180-mile driving tour is hosted by [Visit Lake Charles](#), with the trailhead near Interstate 10 at Adventure Point Visitor Center in Sulphur, Louisiana.





The Parish's Challenges

Though opportunities abound, challenges face the parish as well. Those listed below are largely the result of the frequency and cumulative impact of intense storms since Hurricane Rita in 2005.

- A lack of infrastructure, tourist support facilities, and services which makes it difficult to attract visitors and address their needs.
- The current population of Cameron Parish is about half what it was in 2000, having dropped from just under 10,000 residents to a little over 5,000 in 2022. Many left or were displaced because of the hurricanes, reducing the organizational capacity of the area, and making recovery even more difficult.
- Wetland loss, coastal erosion, and saltwater intrusion severely impact wildlife habitat, natural storm resiliency, and coastal protection.
- The rising cost of insurance inhibits rebuilding and new development efforts.
- There is a need to develop innovative and sustainable uses of modular facilities that are portable, easy to move, repair, and recycle. This can also be considered an opportunity.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Cameron Parish is well-positioned to take advantage of the trends in ecotourism, being surrounded by an abundance of outstanding nature-based outdoor recreation spaces for travelers, along with great opportunities for those wishing to combine cycling, paddling, hiking, and camping with their experience. In addition, a diverse community comprised of resilient residents, coupled with the local cuisine, warm hospitality, and a vibrant culture, all combine to make Cameron Parish a unique and compelling place, offering “off the beaten path” visitor experiences unlikely to be found anywhere else.

With this in mind, the National Park Service team developed two primary recommendations and eight initiatives to help parish leaders take advantage of the region’s unique combination of strengths and opportunities.



RECOMMENDATION 1

Establish a Vision for Cameron Parish as an International Destination for Sustainable Ecotourism

The Cameron Parish Preservation Alliance can take the initial steps towards turning this vision into reality by first tackling immediate and short-term action items.

IMMEDIATE ACTION ITEMS

Review and share this report.

Gauge community support for the vision by:

- Connecting with residents and soliciting their input.
- Exploring and evaluating the partnership opportunities presented here.
- Reaching out to the following stakeholders and potential partners:
 - The Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana
 - The Cameron Tourist Commission
 - Visit Lake Charles
 - The Southwest Louisiana Regional Planning Commission
 - Alliance of Southwest Louisiana
 - Cameron Parish Police Jury
 - U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
 - Ecotourism operators, charter, and guide services
 - Lodging and campground operators
 - McNeese State University
 - Community leaders from Cameron, Hackberry, Holly Beach, and Johnson Bayou

The Cameron Parish Preservation Alliance should form an Ecotourism Steering Committee, with representation from the stakeholders and partners listed above.

Ecotourism

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as the “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.”

According to the [Ecotourism Market Size, Share, & Trends Analysis Report, 2022 – 2030](#) by Grand View Research, “the global ecotourism market size was valued at \$185.87 billion in 2021 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 15.2% from 2022 to 2030. The growth is mainly driven by the rising popularity of immersive travel, outdoor recreational activities, and solo traveling coupled with rapid urbanization. The growing awareness about the adverse impact of tourism on the environment such as water pollution, soil erosion, and habitat loss has prompted sustainable tourists and government authorities to promote ecotourism and contribute to the growth of the industry.” The trends for the U.S. ecotourism market (and Cameron Parish) are equally promising.

Ecotourists seek opportunities for birding and wildlife watching, photography, native plant study, stargazing, and immersion in local cultures. They’re looking for both water-based activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding, as well as land-based activities like trekking, nature walks, hiking, and mountain climbing. Apart from mountain climbing, Cameron Parish offers everything that ecotourists are searching for!

The Ecotourism Steering Committee can begin addressing the Short-Term Action Items outlined on the next page.



SHORT-TERM ACTION ITEMS

Develop a Mission Statement. Embrace the concept of sustainable ecotourism, defined as the “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.”

Consider becoming a member with The International Ecotourism Society. The widely respected organization offers a world-wide perspective, location designation, and education programs, including an Ecotourism Master Class Series, internships, and a Certificate in Sustainable Tourism Management.

Review the ecotourism information found in “Relevant Resources.” The Coastal Alabama Partnership’s [Regional Ecotourism Plan](#) is a good introduction to the process. It’s particularly relevant and applicable to Cameron Parish.

Reach out to, and visit, the following Gulf Coast communities that are embracing, developing, promoting, and benefiting from nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities and ecotourism. They provide relevant examples and resources for Cameron Parish.

[Everglades City, Florida](#) is a designated Florida Trail Town and gateway to Everglades National Park as well as many other land and water-based outdoor recreation areas. A very small town with less than 500 residents, it boasts a thriving ecotourism economy and an approved [Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan](#). Their [website](#) can serve as a model for Cameron Parish. It includes their trails, information on ecotourism opportunities, and the positive economic impact of outdoor recreation on the community.

[Grand Isle, Louisiana](#) is the state’s only inhabited barrier island and offers birding and kayaking among numerous trails and preserves to explore. Grand Isle State Park offers a camping area that can accommodate up to 100 families or groups. In 2023, the island marked 25 years of hosting the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival.

[Gulf Shores, Alabama](#) is home to Gulf State Park which features environmentally friendly facilities such as the Eagle Cottages, a member of Unique Lodges of the World. The [website](#) embodies the concept of “total visitor experiences,” while promoting responsible tourism. Gulf Shores is also home to the [Gulf Coast Center for Ecotourism and Sustainability](#), a nonprofit organization with a mission “to promote sustainable tourism, raise environmental awareness, and encourage the stewardship of natural resources in order to increase community resilience, strengthen the coastal economy, and enhance the quality of life of the residents and visitors of the Gulf Coast Region.” The Steering Committee could explore partnership opportunities with the organization since it closely embodies the goals envisioned for Cameron Parish.

Keep the public continuously engaged and informed throughout the process. Use the input collected during the SWOT Analysis, and any other public engagement activities, to help prioritize the recommendations and initiatives developed by the National Park Service team. Partnerships can now be formalized, and the funding sources provided by NPS-RTCA can be reviewed.

Develop a Strategic Plan for implementation of the prioritized recommendations and initiatives.

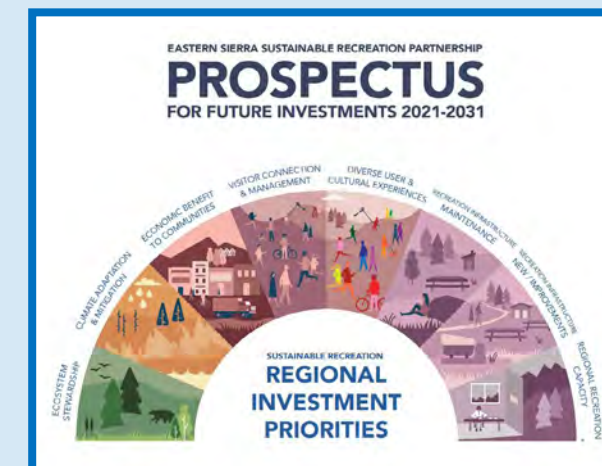
- The plan should include, but does not need to be limited to, addressing Initiatives 2-8.
- In forming the Strategic Plan, the Steering Committee can consider the approach developed by the Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership. Though the two environments, Southwest Louisiana’s coastal lowlands and California’s high Sierra’s mountains, could hardly be more different, the challenges and opportunities are very similar.

The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership

The Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership (ESSRP) is a unique “public/public” partnership formed to encourage collaboration among local Eastern Sierra governments, state agencies, federal agencies, other public entities, and sovereign tribes. The partnership aims to promote sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism in the region while ensuring the public’s natural resources are enjoyed responsibly so that they will enrich and inspire for generations to come.

The ESSRP was launched in March 2019 with a grant of \$618,750 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC). The SNC’s Governing Board awarded the grant to launch the “[Eastern Sierra Sustainable Recreation Partnership: Sustainable Recreation and Tourism Initiative \(SRTI\)](#).” The SRTI’s program of work was distributed across four areas of focus: Regional Recreation Stakeholder Engagement, Climate Adaptation and Resilience Assessment, Connection to the Eastern Sierra Visitor Audience, and Project Development and Prioritization for Funding.

The ESSRP is a regional voice that is emerging as a leader for sustainable outdoor recreation in California. The program’s four areas of focus are relevant to Cameron Parish, and southwest Louisiana in general, and the components of regional investment shown below may be of particular interest.



[Download the ESSRP Regional Investment Priorities.](#)

The partnership developed and implemented strategies related to sustainable recreation and tourism, climate resiliency, and is supporting visitor services. Through collaboration and the leveraging of resources, the partnership is working to achieve their shared goals. NPS-RTCA supported the partnership by coordinating with leaders from the six National Park Service units that are located within the Eastern Sierra landscape. The parish could consider applying for similar assistance, as well.

It may serve the Steering Committee well to approach the following organizations for assistance with these initial tasks. The organizations can help with planning, building organizational capacity, marketing, and eventually, building support and securing funding.

- [The Southwest Louisiana Regional Planning Commission \(SWLA-RPC\)](#)
- [Alliance of Southwest Louisiana](#), the partnership organization of the Chamber SWLA and the Alliance Foundation.
- [The Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana](#)
- [McNeese State University’s College of Business](#) could help develop programs for workforce and businesses development required for a sustainable ecotourism economy.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Turn the Vision into Reality through these Eight Initiatives

1. Promote the Creole Nature Trail as the Regional Hub for Ecotourism

2. Develop a Greenway and Blueway Network between Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes

3. Improve and Add Access Facilities and Services to Enhance Ecotourism

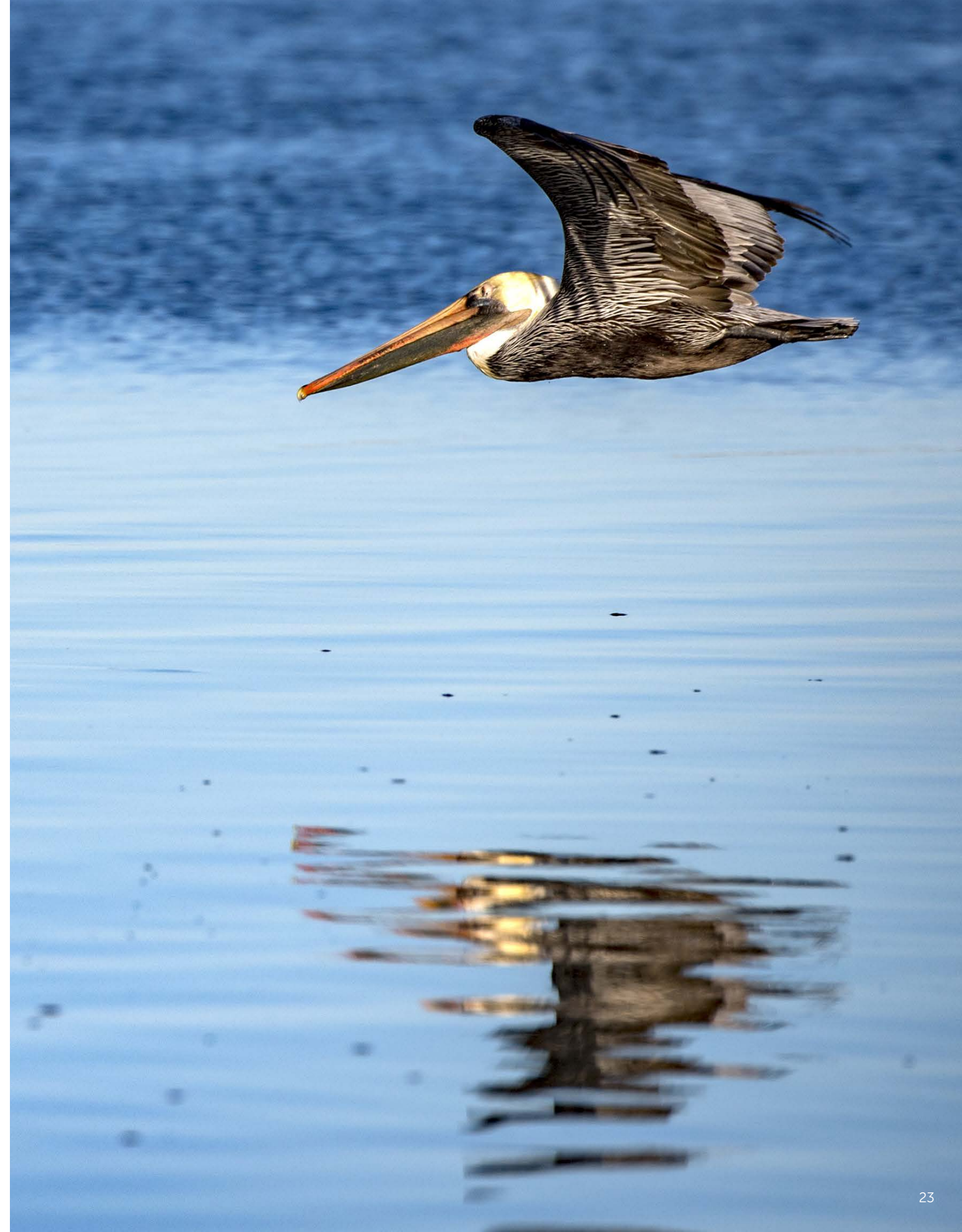
4. Market to the Outdoor Recreation and Nature-Based Ecotourism Communities

5. Enhance Cameron Parish's International Reputation for Birding

6. Promote and Publicize the Conservation Successes along the Gulf Coast

7. Think BIG and Fill in the Blanks

8. Strengthen Place Attachment for Residents and Those Who Have Been Displaced



INITIATIVE 1

Promote the Creole Nature Trail as the Regional Hub of Ecotourism

The Creole Nature Trail provides easy access to just about every ecotourism and outdoor recreation opportunity the parish offers. As such, it should be the cornerstone of all marketing efforts.

In addition to ecotourism, emphasize the Creole Nature Trail's connection to the region's other outdoor recreation opportunities. Work with [Visit Lake Charles](#), the [Cameron Parish Tourism Commission](#), [Calcasieu Parish Parks](#), [City of Lake Charles Department of Recreation and Parks](#), and [Explore Louisiana](#) which recently began a collaborative effort to develop an inventory of the [City of Lake Charles](#), [Calcasieu Parish](#), and state park and recreation facilities. The final product will be easily searchable, and provide both residents and visitors alike a one-stop shopping experience for outdoor recreation opportunities in the state.

This effort could be expanded to include an inventory of the parks and recreation facilities and services, located throughout Cameron Parish and on the Creole Nature Trail. It may also be worthwhile to conduct a survey of the travelers on the route to help determine needs not currently being met. This can lead to working with the local business community to meet those needs. An organization like Alliance of Southwest Louisiana may be a great partner in this endeavor.





INITIATIVE 2

Develop a Greenway and Blueway Network between Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes

There is an obvious and natural connection between the Creole Nature Trail in Cameron Parish and the Bayou Greenbelt Project in Calcasieu Parish. One of the Catalytic Projects for Just Imagine SWLA and a Civic Project for the Community Foundation of SWLA, the Bayou Greenbelt will link bayous, rivers, and lakes around the City of Lake Charles through a 23-mile system of greenways and blueways providing nature-based tourism opportunities that would complement and serve as a gateway to similar resources in Cameron Parish.

Any additional physical connections, like those highlighted in the regional map, or related marketing efforts, would expand the reach and impact of Bayou Greenbelt and the Creole Nature Trail even more, improving the quality of life in both parishes, and enhancing the tourism economy by providing a vast array of visitor experiences.

For example, think of a visitor beginning their day on the Cameron Parish coast shelling, while watching the sunrise over the ocean. Then they're birding, crabbing, photographing wildlife, or fishing with a local guide or charter service, anywhere along the Creole Nature Trail. They can head up and kayak a section of the Bayou Greenbelt and end the day at a waterfront restaurant watching the sun set over Lake Charles.

The nature-based opportunities and tourism facilities and services offered by each parish complement each other. Explore this connection further by reaching out to the Community Foundation's Director of Civic Projects, Jill Galmarini.

REGIONAL BLUEWAYS & GREENWAYS



INITIATIVE 3

Improve and Add Access Facilities and Services to Enhance Ecotourism

PADDLING/BOATING ACCESS FACILITIES

As can be seen in the photo of the Gibbstown Bridge access site, boating and paddling facilities could offer more efficient use and better experiences for both residents and visitors.

NPS-RTCA recommends improvements at the Highway 27 Gibbstown Bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway and the Mermentau River access sites. Improvements can include parking lot and circulation enhancements as well as amenities such as shade structures, fishing pier, and a fish cleaning station. (Such improvements may be considered “community benefit” projects by the local liquefied natural gas industry making them eligible for potential funding or cost sharing.) The National Park Service’s conceptual drawings for both access points are shown below.

The following resources can help with planning boating and paddling access sites throughout the parish:

- The National Park Service’s [River Access Planning Guide](#).
- The River Management Society’s [Guidelines For Assessing, Designing, and Building Access Sites](#).
- [EZ Dock’s](#) accessible kayak launch systems and docks.



Gibbstown Bridge access site. NPS photo.



NPS concept drawings of the Gibbstown Bridge and Mermentau River access sites



RENTALS AND SUPPLIES

Solicit vendors to provide bike, kayak, and paddleboard rentals along the Creole Nature Trail, as well as retailers that can offer outdoor recreation and nature-based activity supplies.

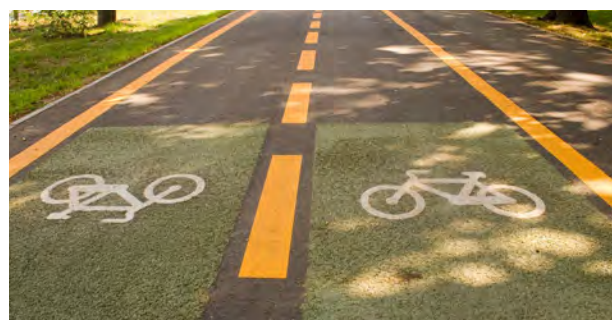
Consider using innovative self-serve models for kayak and bike rentals. These provide lockable kayaks, canoes, and bikes that can be rented at locations near water access sites without the need for transportation. Lockers with key access can hold life jackets, paddles, and other gear.



Kayak rentals near a water access site at Sam Houston Jones State Park.

CYCLING

Develop local cycling trails and related infrastructure. Start with designated bike lanes on as much of the Creole Nature Trail as possible. Add bike lanes to other roads, as well. Incorporate proper signage, and include bike repair/pump stations, shade structures, bike racks, and lockable storage. Strive for connections between the area’s National Wildlife Refuges, towns, beaches, campgrounds, RV resorts, and lodging.

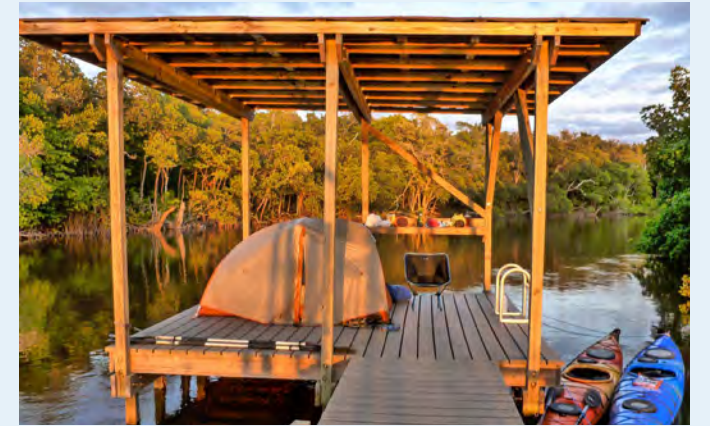


CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES

Develop simple tent sites and primitive platform campsites like the one shown above. These can be constructed on land or water and can be designed and located for access from road, water, or trail. At a reasonable cost, they would provide quick payback. These could be offered by the private sector, local public entities, or public/private partnerships.

Consider developing opportunities for glamping, a luxury form of primitive camping growing in popularity. See [The Best Louisiana State Parks Camping Sites | Tentrr](#), for a local example of a public/private partnership that is providing glamping at Sam Houston Jones State Park. Tents and decks can be moved in the event of storms.

Consider offering mobile camping trailers or tiny homes on wheels for rent. These often don’t require foundational support and allow for relocation further inland in the event of a storm. However, as they do need to be trailered, they can add to traffic on evacuation routes. If left behind during a major storm event, they are subject to lack of available insurance and are often complete losses.



A platform campsite located in Everglades National Park. NPS/Jane Gamble



Glamping at Sam Houston Jones State Park



WILDLIFE OBSERVATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY SITES

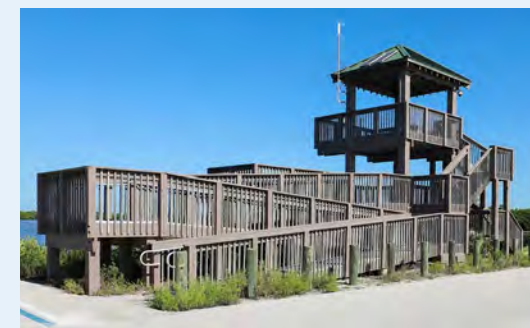
Consider constructing wildlife blinds and including interpretive displays and signage to improve the visitor experience, while also protecting the wildlife.

Work with local wildlife/landscape photographers to develop a “Photo Opportunities Guide.”



WAYFINDING AND INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE NEEDS

Ensure that wayfinding, interpretive, and informational signage is included in all projects. Attractive interpretive signage helps enhance visitor experiences, increases awareness of the surrounding and its inhabitants, and leads to advocacy for our environment.



PROGRAMMING FACILITIES

Cameron Parish would be a great location for a facility like North Beach Eco Park in Corpus Christi, Texas, a planning project that NPS-RTCA assisted with. [North Beach Eco Park](#) is home to migratory bird habitats, trails, and educational programming.

The [Gulf Coast Bird Observatory](#) in Texas provides volunteer research programs for birders and naturalists. Offering something similar could add to the Cameron Parish visitor experience and could potentially lead to a partnership with the Texas facility.

INITIATIVE 4

Market to the Outdoor Recreation and Nature-Based Ecotourism Communities

Marketing will be a critical aspect of turning Cameron Parish's ecotourism vision into a reality. Partner and cross-market with Visit Lake Charles, the Cameron Parish Tourism Commission, and Explore Louisiana. It may be wise to consider engaging a firm with specific experience in the ecotourism field, to help with establishing a brand and sound marketing approach. Some initial initiatives could include the following.

PROMOTE TOTAL VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Include total visitor experiences when marketing to birders, cyclists, paddlers, hikers, and nature-oriented travelers. Birders, photographers, hikers, paddlers, and cyclists need and want places to eat, sleep, and shop, but they also want to be entertained and engaged. Conduct regular exercises during public meetings or by online surveys to get a scope for the total visitor experience. Ask residents about unique, interesting, or quirky activities, places, and experiences that would attract visitors to the area. These make up the total visitor experience that travelers are seeking. Be sure to share the experiences with local tourism officials.



In addition, consider the following ideas, suggestions, and resources:

Develop a crabbing trail and brochure to help market this extremely popular activity. The [Crabbing Hub](#) is a fun, informative website regarding crabbing in general, and includes an interactive map showing the best locations.

Take advantage of the growth in dark sky tourism. Promote the best stargazing opportunities along Cameron Parish's coast and near-shore waters and explore the possibility of achieving the [International Dark-Sky Association \(IDA\)](#) designation.

Use [this light pollution map](#) for night sky information from around the world. Cameron Parish can use the guidelines and resources found on IDA's website to make targeted lighting retrofits to reduce light pollution and improve the view of the constellations, planets, moon, shooting stars, Milky Way, and other wonders of the night sky.

Promote biking and birding by encouraging visitors to use tools like [STRAVA](#) and [eBird](#). STRAVA's nation-wide heatmaps show popular routes that cyclists enjoy. Explore combining STRAVA's heatmaps and eBird's hotspots map to promote the connection and experience.

There are multiple fishing opportunities that provide different types of experiences throughout the parish. Check out the [Creole Nature Trail's fish identification guide](#).

If the fish aren't biting, travelers can find [fresh, local, and wild caught seafood](#) from local sellers.

Offer birding workshops like the [Gulf Coast Birding Club's events](#).

Surfing in Louisiana? Absolutely! Surfers frequent Grand Isle and Lake Pontchartrain but also hit the waves at Cameron's Holly, Mae's, and Rutherford beaches. Check out [Pontcha Surf Club's website](#) for information and local conditions. For some cool Louisiana surfing history, check out [this article from the Lafayette Daily Advertiser](#).

Think regionally and include wildlife refuges in Texas located just across the Sabine River in promotions. Partner with Visit Port Arthur and the City of Beaumont, who are already marketing the Creole Nature Trail on their [website!](#)

The [Gulf Coast Bird Observatory](#) in Texas provides volunteer research programs for birders and naturalists. Offering something similar could draw visitors and provide a partnership opportunity.

[Paddling.com](#) is a good website with resources and a way to connect to the paddling community. Their interactive map and app are great for identifying paddling opportunities.

The [Visit Lake Charles Digital Inspiration Guide](#) outlines new things to do in the area along with local stories. It's an excellent compilation of total visitor experiences, and a good example to follow.

The area's rice and crawfish farms could offer agritourism opportunities.

Establish strong partnerships with tourism organizations and operators in New Orleans. The experiences available in Cameron Parish can be added to the itinerary of those visiting the ["Big Easy,"](#) and vice-versa, providing a tourism win-win for both areas.

REACH OUT TO UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

Cameron Parish can attract more visitors to the area by reaching out to underserved communities, in part through promotion, but also by ensuring that facilities and services are welcoming, accessible, and inclusive. The following resources contain excellent information regarding recreation participation trends, inclusion in the outdoors, and underserved markets.

National Recreation and Parks Association's [2023 Engagement with Parks Report](#) is an excellent resource to better understand how parks are a staple in communities across the country. In the report, there is a section on how to make parks safe and inclusive spaces for all.

The National Recreation and Park Association's [Parks for Inclusion Policy Guide](#) is a set of resources designed to guide agencies in creating and implementing inclusive policies in local parks and recreation.

Headwaters Economics' [Inspiring the Future Outdoor Recreation Economy, 2021](#) is a report that shows the economic contributions of outdoor recreation.

[Five Ways to Make the Outdoors More Inclusive](#) is an action plan produced by The Atlantic and REI.

[Outdoor Afro](#) and [Latino Outdoors](#) are two national leadership organizations promoting inclusion and equity in the outdoors.

The [American Canoe Association](#) promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in paddling.

The National Wildlife Federation's [Safe Spaces Initiative](#) includes recordings from their past roundtables about creating safe spaces.

[People for Bikes](#) is an advocacy group promoting biking for all.

INITIATIVE 5

Enhance Cameron Parish's International Reputation for Birding

Cameron Parish's reputation for birding is well known and can be the foundation to draw a wider range of ecotourists. Don't take this reputation for granted though – enhance it!

Use the following resources and marketing suggestions to reach national and international birding audiences:

[Guide for Beginners and Advanced Birders – Birding in Calcasieu and Cameron Parishes.](#) An easy to use, and comprehensive, local guide. Additionally, the website highlights information about what to expect, when the birding season is, and recommended equipment.

The Audubon Society's [Southwest Louisiana Birding Guide.](#)

Explore Louisiana's guide to [America's Wetland Birding Trail.](#) Consisting of 115 bird watching sites crossing through 22 Louisiana parishes, the guide highlights the Sabine, Creole, and Lacassine birding loops in Cameron Parish.

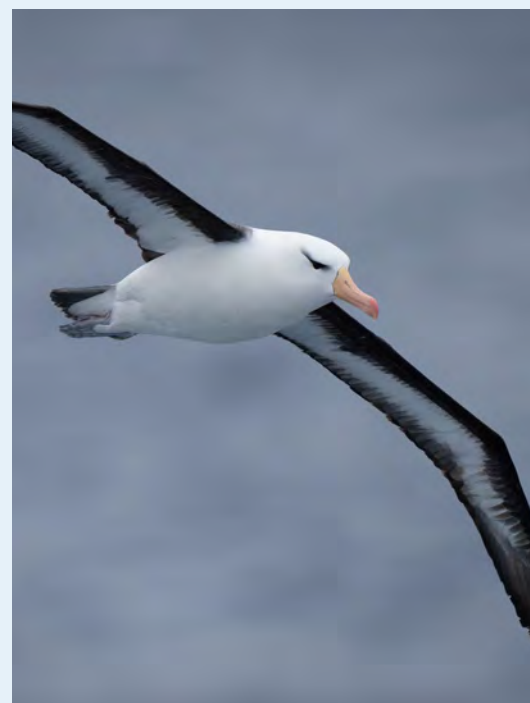
[Bird Treks](#) offers birding tours in Cameron Parish stating that it is "the state's premier birding locale, with its vast marshlands and beautiful, bird-filled beaches."

[Louisiana Ornithological Society \(LOS\)](#) promotes birding throughout the state, partly through events and birding groups, including the [Gulf Coast Bird Club](#) located in Lake Charles.

[eBird](#) is an incredible database that helps birders learn about species within a particular area. eBird also keeps records of bird sightings and helps users plan trips by sharing birding hotspots.

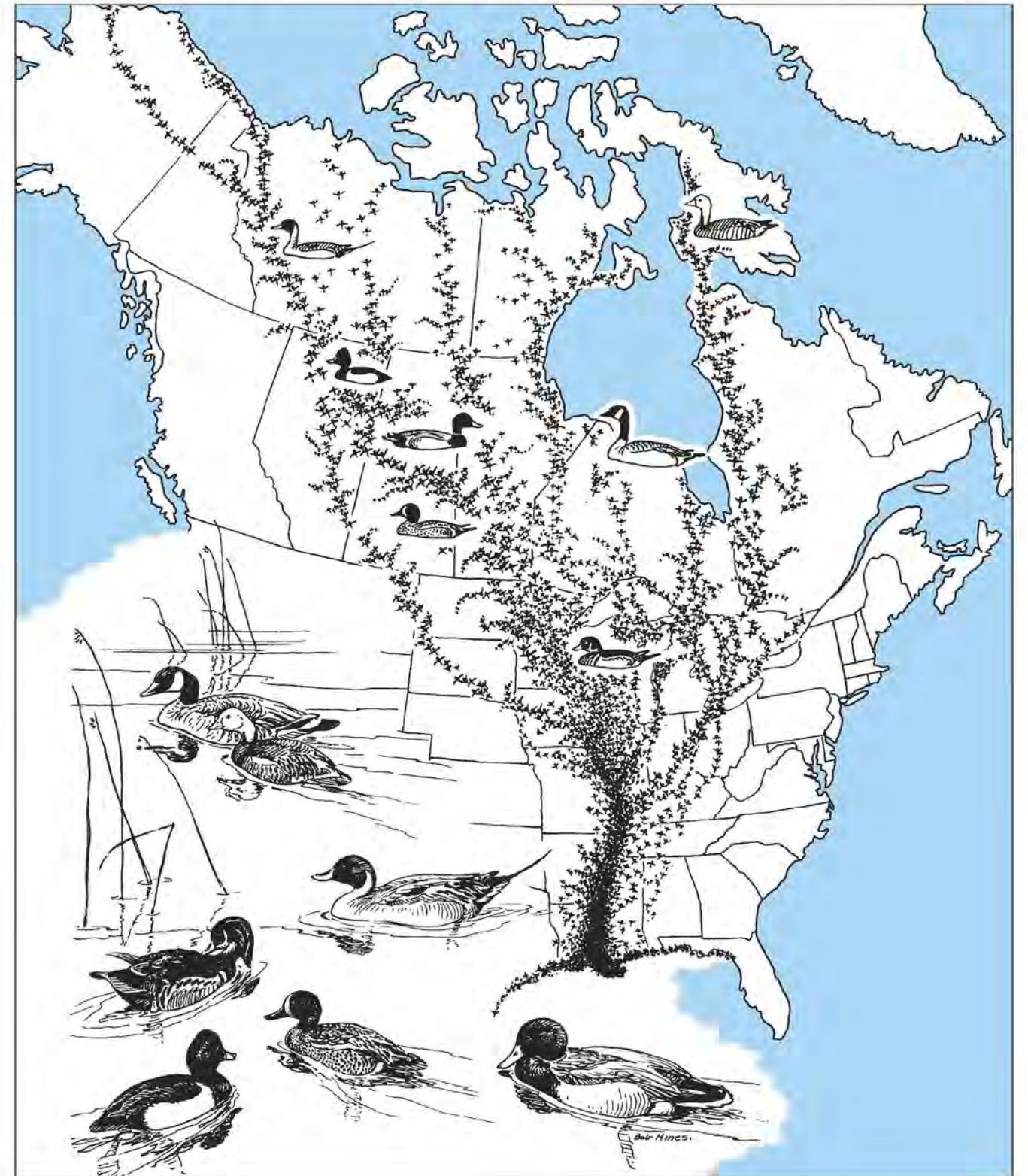
Pelagic birding offers another way to bird which involves taking a boat out into the ocean to find birds that can only be seen there. [Texas Pelagics](#), "is dedicated to promoting public pelagic birding trips and advancing the knowledge of pelagic birds in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico." The trips organized by the nonprofit organization also include the opportunity to see up to 22 marine mammal species. Cameron Parish could draw adventurous birders and ecotourists by working with local charter services to provide this truly unique experience. Check out a [1996 newsletter from the American Birding Association](#) about pelagic birding in the Gulf of Mexico which features the following summary:

"Although true pelagic birding in the Gulf of Mexico is relatively new, and bird numbers are not as high as Monterey Bay, Westport, or Cape Hatteras, a pelagic trip here has its own unique qualities. These trips usually produce good views of birds, often uncommon elsewhere in the US and provide natural history experiences not available in other areas. For those birders who desire to be true ornithological pioneers, the Gulf of Mexico is a wilderness with many discoveries still to come."



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Mississippi Flyway



The Mississippi Flyway is a migratory conduit for North and South American birds, drawing birders from around the world to Cameron Parish.



INITIATIVE 6

Promote and Publicize the Conservation Successes along the Gulf Coast

Show the commitment being made to protect the Gulf Coast environment by touting the numerous coastal wetland restoration projects, land conservation purchases, coastal and habitat protection efforts, and water quality initiatives that have been completed, and are being planned for, in southwest Louisiana.

The following resources from the [Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority \(CPRA\)](#) provide great information about conservation along the Gulf Coast and should be featured in ecotourism marketing efforts.

The CPRA has an [interactive map](#) which highlights all the coastal and wetland protection and restoration projects across Louisiana. The CPRA also has a [tool to view information about the coastal projects in Cameron Parish](#) since 2007 as well as the current and future restoration projects.

The CPRA's [2023 Louisiana's Comprehensive Master Plan for a Sustainable Coast](#) features informative and easy to understand graphics and detailed maps about coastal restoration and risk reduction goals for the state.

DEVELOP A COASTAL CONSERVATION TRAIL

Ecotourists are interested in environmental issues, and a visit to coastal and wetland project sites would add to their total visitor experience. These sites also provide educational opportunities for residents and students. Potential exists for the development of a Coastal Conservation Trail featuring a cycling, driving, and paddling tour of restoration and protection sites. Many could be accessed by the Creole Nature Trail and its connections.

Ecotourism companies could be part of the project from the start and could possibly provide trips to the harder to access sites. The Steering Committee should reach out to administrating agency staff for each project area to explore possible options, and to determine if access is permitted, possible, and practical. Discuss the potential for interpretive signage, and provision of educational programs as well. At minimum, create a marketing piece showing the various sites in Cameron Parish and how to access them, with basic project and contact information.

In addition to enhancing tourism, visitation to these sites would increase awareness and support for the protection of Louisiana's coast. Cameron Parish can lead the way, serving as the beginning of a trail that could travel east and highlight conservation successes along the entire coast.

[Louisiana State University's Center for River Studies](#) could be a potential partner for this and other projects, and at minimum, an important resource. The Center, a collaborative partnership between the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority and Louisiana State University, is an unprecedented effort to showcase Louisiana's working delta, the state's coastal programs, and research dedicated to coastal restoration and river management. A visit to the Center itself would be a draw for ecotourists.

Throughout this process, advocate for the preservation and protection of the natural resources that make Cameron Parish an international ecotourism destination!



INITIATIVE 7

Think BIG and Fill in the Blanks

A quick look at Paddle the Gulf and Explore Louisiana's biking and hiking routes shows trails east and west of Cameron Parish, but a blank space within. Look at it positively, consider the parish a clean slate and think BIG! Picture Cameron Parish as the keystone of a new Gulf Coast National Scenic Trail and a new National Coastal Saltwater Paddling Trail, both stretching from the western terminus of the Florida National Scenic Trail through Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and on into Texas, drawing cyclists, hikers, and paddlers from around the country. Partner with your neighbors to the east and west, who are actively planning and developing trails.

Review what Florida has done with the Florida National Scenic Trail and the Florida Circumnavigational Saltwater Paddling Trail. Each trail offers more than 1,500 miles of hiking and paddling.

Work on potential connections with the Mississippi Coastal Heritage Trail, the signature project of the Gulf Coast Heritage Trails Partnership.

Review Texas' coastal paddling and land-based trails that offer more opportunities for connections. A prime example is the Lower Texas Coast Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail.

Explore the potential for water trail development on the Calcasieu and Mermentau rivers. Work towards National Water Trails System designation for both. The nearby Bayou Teche Paddle Trail is a great local example, and one that Steering Committee members could experience for themselves to see the benefits firsthand.

INITIATIVE 8

Strengthen Place Attachment for Residents and Those Who Have Been Displaced

All the recommended actions within this report would have a cumulative effect in enhancing the sense of “place attachment” for current residents. Place attachment is defined as the emotional bond between a person and place. To help restore it for those who have been displaced because of storms, the Steering Committee can identify and reach out to them through family, friends, and social media. Keep them informed regarding outdoor recreation opportunities being developed, a growing ecotourism industry, ongoing coastal and wetland restoration achievements, and the resulting positive economic impacts. Engage them in the efforts to revitalize their home and ask for their input and involvement. Ideally, make the possibility of returning attractive and feasible, in part by implementing the recommendations included here.

Involve younger parish residents, as well. Work with local schools, the Johnson Bayou Recreation Center, McNeese State University, the wildlife refuges, 4-H, Future Farmers of America, and more, to provide outdoor recreational experiences as well as natural and cultural history educational programming.

The following resources may also be helpful in inspiring residents and visitors:

Information about “[Place Attachment and Meaning](#)” by the U.S. Forest Service, Urban and Community Forestry, and University of Washington.

An excellent article from the Weather Channel about the recent storms: [Life In Louisiana's Forever Storm](#)

Inspiring stories of resiliency after Hurricane Katrina by Southern Living: [Coastal Mississippi Is Back—And Now's The Time To Visit These Beautiful Towns](#)

The book, [Images of America: Cameron Parish](#), by Andrew (Andy) Edward Tingler, a local author, historian, meteorologist, and conservationist.

SHARE YOUR STORIES!

Include stories in marketing efforts to describe the local culture, history, and current events. This will not only enhance place attachment for residents but can attract visitors by helping them establish a connection to your community, as well. Check out [Visit Lake Charles' Digital Inspiration Guide](#) for great examples.



MOVING FORWARD

The Mississippi Flyway is an avian highway, stretching from the Arctic to South America, and right through Cameron Parish. Its path through the parish has resulted in some of the nation's most significant wildlife refuges. If more than 325 species of birds can get here from the ends of the earth, outdoor recreation and nature-based ecotourists will surely "flock" here too. It's a welcoming place for both birds and people to rest, refuel, and return each year!

It will require the collaborative efforts of partners, stakeholders, and residents, but Mother Nature has certainly positioned Cameron Parish to be a leader in the world of ecotourism. The National Park Service hopes that the vision, recommendations, and resources presented in this report will help Cameron Parish build a strong and sustainable new economy, while protecting and preserving its unique natural heritage and cultural resources.

*"Vision without action is merely a dream.
Action without vision just passes the time.
Vision with action can change the world."*

JOEL A. BARKER



The following resources have been specifically included to help Cameron Parish address the recommendations and initiatives outlined above. They may lead to new ideas, as well.

Appendix A Background Information

Community Applications for National Park Service Assistance

Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities Analysis (SWOT)

SWOT Analysis with Post-it note comments are shown and summarized below. They are in the participant's order of significance and/or priority.

SWOT Analysis dates:
May 17 and June 2, 2022

Strengths

- The parish's fishing, hunting, and wildlife resources.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities.
- 26 miles of public beaches, and excellent access to waterways.
- The public's desire to see Cameron Parish grow and improve.
- The land itself, featuring wide-open spaces.
- The hospitality and local cuisine.
- Four national wildlife refuges.
- Protection for developed communities.

Weaknesses

- Lack of visitor amenities in lower Cameron Parish, particularly gas and food retailers.
- The difficulty, and high cost, involved with securing insurance.
- The "fear of June through November."
- Little opportunity for work other than government or plant employment.
- The area is often forgotten because of its small population relative to larger communities nearby.
- Young people are moving away.
- The expense involved with adapting to changing local conditions.
- The scarcity and high price of land for development.
- Potential developers face a high level of risk.
- Loss of hope, government buyouts, and generational addiction.

Opportunities

- Grocery stores and retail operations in general.
- An app for potential visitors to help them explore Cameron Parish.
- Providing supplies for ecotourists in lower Cameron Parish.
- Involving large landowners in planning.
- Emulating what Grand Isle has done.
- Educating and preparing Adventure Point's volunteers.
- Engaging area students, cultivating young leaders in nature-based areas, and working with 4-H.
- Hurricane protection and resiliency projects.
- Naturalist and eco tours.
- Outdoor recreational services.
- Retirement communities.

Threats

- The continuing rise in the cost of insurance.
- Coastal land loss due to subsidence and sea level rise.
- The hurricane debris that remains in natural areas and underwater.
- Property that has been neglected because of hurricanes.
- Loss of cultural structures.
- Competition from Vermillion and Jeff Davis parishes, who are already taking advantage of ecotourism opportunities.
- Being known for "horror tourism," with visitors coming only to view storm damage.

Appendix B Ecotourism

Cameron Parish has the potential to be an international destination for ecotourism. Affiliation with [The International Ecotourism Society](#) would be a natural fit.

The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable's [Rural Economic Development Toolkit](#).

Grand View Research's [Ecotourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report](#).

Maximize Market Research's [Ecotourism Market – Global Industry Analysis and Forecast \(2023-2029\)](#).

Ecotourism Development – A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers

[Volume 1: An Introduction to Ecotourism Planning](#)

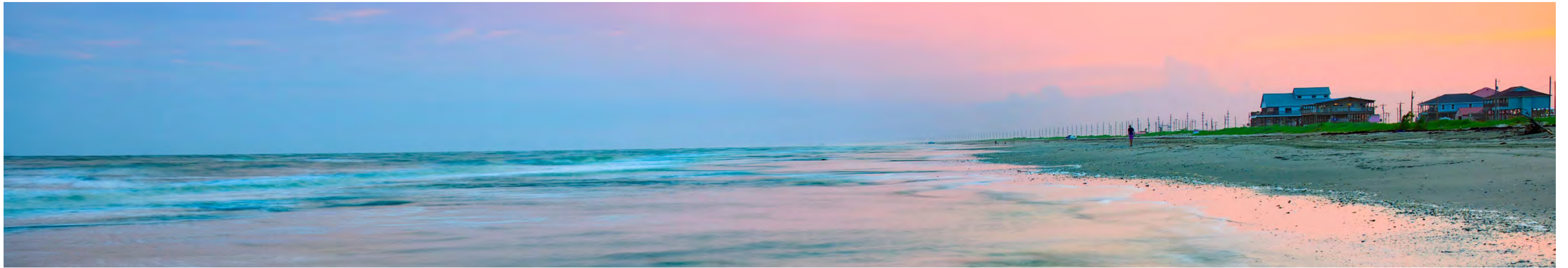
[Volume 2: The Business of Ecotourism Development and Management](#)

Coastal Alabama Partnership's [Regional Ecotourism Plan](#). Steering Committee members should review the plan prepared by Beyond Green Travel – it is an enjoyable read and is extremely relevant and applicable to Cameron Parish.

University of Florida's [How to Develop a Marketing Plan for Your Ecotourism Business](#).

The EPA's [Recreation Economy for Rural Communities](#) planning assistance program helps communities identify strategies to grow their outdoor recreation economy and revitalize their main streets.





Appendix C Resiliency and Sustainability

A resilient Cameron Parish will be key to a sustainable ecotourism-based economy. The following resources provide critical information to help achieve this goal.

As illustrated throughout this report, nature provides opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism. FEMA's guide, [Building Community Resilience with Nature-Based Solutions](#), demonstrates how it also can play a critical role in the design of resilient communities and protecting the environment. The publication's introduction contains an excellent description of this concept:

"Nature-based solutions are sustainable planning, design, environmental management, and engineering practices that weave natural features or processes into the built environment to promote adaptation and resilience. Such solutions enlist natural features and processes in efforts to combat climate change, reduce flood risks, improve water quality, protect coastal property, restore, and protect wetlands, stabilize shorelines, reduce urban heat, add recreational space, and more."

On a watershed or landscape scale, nature-based solutions include land conservation and greenways, wetland and floodplain restoration and protection, and stormwater parks.

Neighborhood or site scale solutions entail permeable pavement, rain gardens and rainwater harvesting, green streets and roofs, and tree canopies, and vegetated swales.

In coastal areas, nature-based solutions often involve wetlands and dunes, oyster reefs, living shorelines, and waterfront parks that are intentionally designed to flood.

In addition, FEMA's community rating system gives credit for using nature-based solutions, which can result in lower flood insurance costs.

The Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana worked with Urban Design Associates to develop the ["Just Imagine SWLA" initiative](#), a 50-year resilience master plan featuring 11 catalytic projects for Calcasieu and Cameron parishes. Four of the 11 projects may be of relevance to Cameron Parish:

Community Resilience Hubs: The safety of residents during and after disaster events continues to be a critical need for SWLA. Resilience hubs are community-serving facilities that support residents, coordinate communication, distribute resources, and enhance the quality of life. In emergencies, Community Resilience Hubs would provide places for food and water distribution, shelter, charging, cooling, and disaster response coordination. During non-disaster times, these facilities can serve as community buildings for gatherings and recreation.

Coastal Flood Risk Reduction: Sea level rise and increased intensity of tropical storms are the largest threat to the long-term viability and protection of assets in Calcasieu and Cameron parishes. Coastal Flood Risk Reduction focuses on protecting the coast in Cameron while also ensuring that investments in both parishes are shielded against future devastation. Risk reduction projects layer structural and non-structural interventions to reduce loss of life and property from surge events and lower flood insurance. In addition, these projects build on the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority's work with additional layers of structural protection.

Resilient Housing: Increasing the amount of resilient and affordable housing is critical for this region. Residents are facing the increased costs for flood insurance, rent, and buying homes. In addition, there are insufficient practices for rebuilding homes post-disaster. The [Resilient Housing Toolkit](#) is a short, easy-to-navigate document that combines valuable resources from FEMA, and others, to outline the steps needed to build and rebuild resilient housing.

Underutilized Property: A development authority is an entity created by the state to preserve and redevelop distressed areas. A development authority can assemble land, clear title issues on adjudicated (tax delinquent) properties, and help secure funding for projects. It's important that SWLA have a functioning development authority to work on returning the hundreds of vacant, abandoned, and adjudicated properties to productive uses.

[Using Nature to Address Flooding](#) is a guide created by Naturally Resilient Communities that highlights nature-based solutions to help mitigate the effects from flooding. Successful case studies from the United States and Europe are included in the guide.

Louisiana Sea Grant's [Resilient Communities Projects](#) are particularly relevant to Cameron Parish. Five current research projects are geared toward enhancing the resilience of coastal communities.

Appendix D Planning, Organization, and Technical Assistance

The [Southwest Louisiana Regional Planning Commission](#) serves Beauregard, Allen, Jeff Davis, Calcasieu, and Cameron parishes.

The [Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance](#) is the umbrella organization of the Chamber SWLA and the SWLA Alliance Foundation. The organization offers a great connection to the local business community.

[Louisiana Watershed Initiative](#) (LWI) is pursuing a holistic approach to watershed management, one that goes beyond conventional mitigation measures and incorporates nature-based solutions. LWI offers technical assistance, organizational capacity building, and funding. Cameron Parish lies in both Region 4 and 5.*

The [Louisiana Land Conservation Assistance Network](#) provides a wide range of technical conservation assistance from bottomland hardwoods to tax estate planning, green energy and building to natural heritage tourism, and pretty much everything in between.

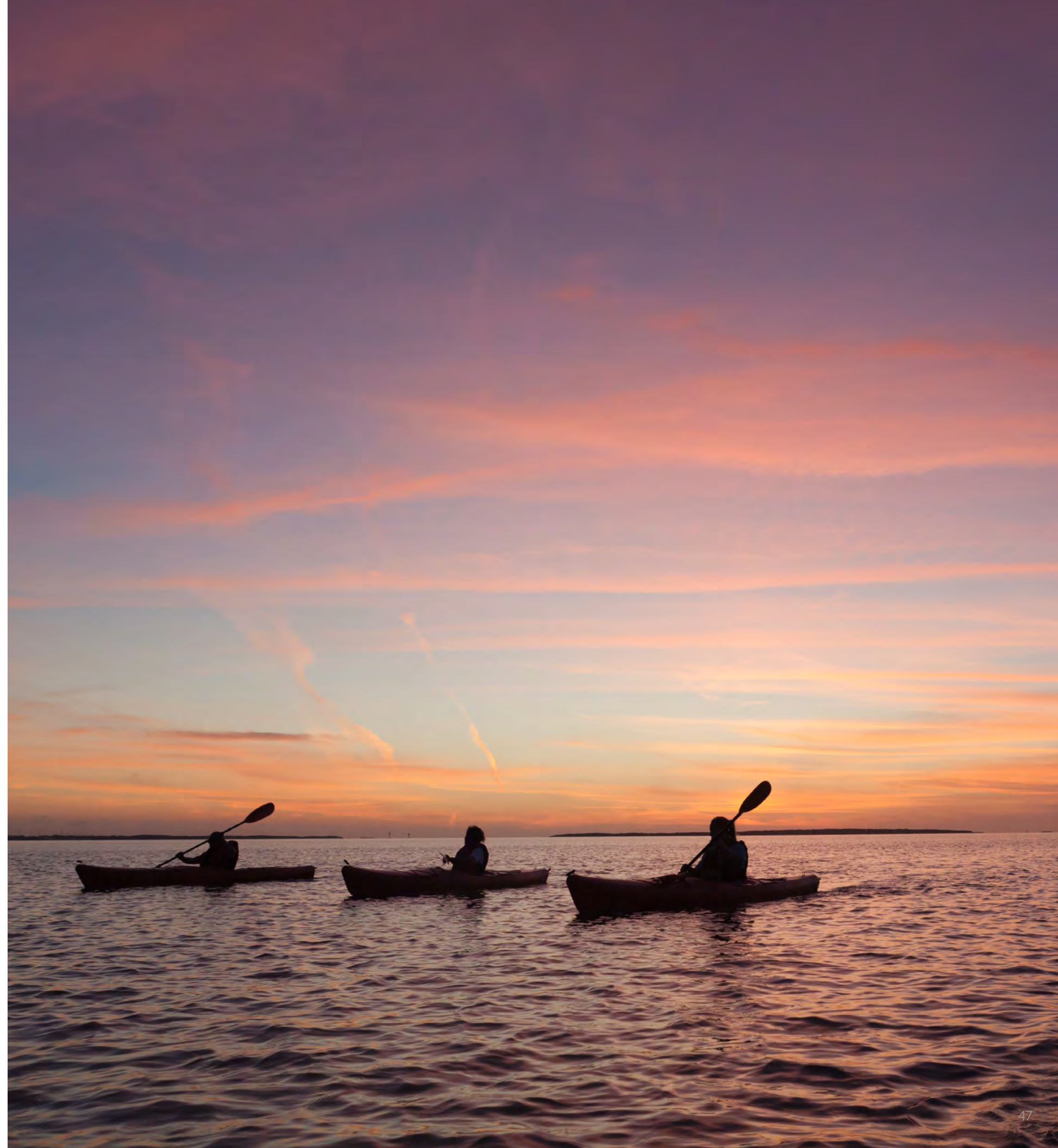
The [Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council](#) is committed to restoring the long-term health of the ecosystems and economy of the Gulf Coast region. They offer support with funding, public outreach, and more. Check out their [2022 Comprehensive Plan Update: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem and Economy](#).

Louisiana's [Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority](#) offers comprehensive planning and funding resources.

The [Gulf of Mexico Alliance](#) is a regional partnership network led by the five Gulf states. Dedicated to working on issues common to the region, the alliance emphasizes partnerships, provides assessments, research, and planning.

* [Region 4 Fiscal Agent](#), *Calcasieu Parish Police Jury*
[Mike Hollier](#), Watershed Coordinator

* [Region 5 Fiscal Agent](#), *Acadiana Planning Commission*
[Kelia Bingham](#), Watershed Coordinator



Appendix E Funding Sources

The [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) and [Recreational Trails Program](#) are federal funding sources for parks and recreation, including trail projects, administered by [Louisiana State Parks](#).

The [Great American Outdoors Act](#) (GAOA), passed in 2020, provides funding to improve infrastructure and expand recreation opportunities in national parks and other public lands, including national wildlife refuges. The legislation established the National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund and guaranteed permanent funding for the existing Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The [Federal Lands Access Program](#) offers grants to improve transportation facilities that provide access to, are adjacent to, or are located within Federal lands, including national wildlife refuges. The Access Program supplements state and local resources for public roads, transit systems, and other transportation facilities, with an emphasis on high-use recreation sites and economic generators. This funding source is particularly relevant to the four national wildlife refuges in the parish.

FEMA's [Louisiana State and Local Level Referrals](#) highlights disaster recovery services.

The [Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development](#) administers several major funding sources.

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, U. S. Department of the Interior, and [Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act](#) provides funding for coastal restoration, hurricane protection, and conservation programs.

The [Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act](#) provides federal legislation and funding for wetland restoration projects.

[Pedestrian and Bicycle Funding Opportunities: U.S. Department of Transportation Highway, Transit, and Safety Funds](#)

The [Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance](#) provides economic development and funding resources.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's [America the Beautiful Challenge Grant](#) is a public-private grant program for locally led ecosystem restoration projects that invest in watershed restoration, resilience, equitable access, workforce development, corridors and connectivity, and collaborative conservation, consistent with the America the Beautiful Initiative.

The [Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation](#) supports environmental programs, outdoor education, and habitat conservation.

Both [Cheniere Energy](#) and [Cameron LNG](#) have a history of community involvement in the area and may be potential project funding partners.

Appendix F Advocacy and User Groups

The [Nature Conservancy in Louisiana](#) and [Ducks Unlimited](#) are both very active on the Gulf Coast.

The [Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana](#) is a nonprofit organization with a mission to unite people in action to achieve a thriving, sustainable Louisiana coast for all.

The [Louisiana Wildlife Federation](#) is a conservation, wildlife, habitat, fishing, and hunting advocacy group.

[Audubon Louisiana](#)

[Friends of Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges and Wetlands](#) supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in promoting environmental awareness and conservation throughout the area.

The [League of American Bicyclists](#) is a bike advocacy, equity, and assistance group. The Bike League's [Bicycle Friendly America program](#) provides advocates and change makers with a roadmap and hands-on assistance to build places more welcoming to people who bike. The [Bicycle Friendly Business program](#) recognizes employers for their efforts to encourage a more welcoming atmosphere for bicycling employees, customers, and the community.

Use this [Bikeability Checklist](#) to assess how bikeable your community is.

The [Adventure Cycling Association](#) maintains the maps, including the [Interactive Network Map](#), for the 18,000-mile U.S. Bicycle Route System. The [Southern Tier route](#) through Beauregard Parish is the only U.S. Bike Route crossing Louisiana. There is an opportunity to coordinate with the Adventure Cycling Association to identify and designate a route through Cameron Parish!

The [Southern Bicycle Company](#) plays an active part in southern Louisiana's local cycling community, with locations in Lake Charles, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge.

[America Walks](#) has resources for assessing and improving pedestrian access. The nonprofit organization also offers technical assistance and grants.

[Paddle the Gulf](#) connects new paddlers to coastal streams and rivers that flow into the Gulf of Mexico so that they can find their own adventures.



FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency Community Assistance Recovery Support Function (CARSF) enables local governments to effectively and efficiently carry out community-based recovery planning and management in a post-disaster environment. CARSF also supports state or territorial governments in developing programs of support for local recovery planning.



NPS-RTCA

Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

The National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (NPS-RTCA) supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects and assists communities with natural disaster recovery across the United States. NPS-RTCA assists communities and public land managers in developing or restoring parks, conservation areas, rivers, and wildlife habitats, as well as creating outdoor recreation opportunities and programs that engage future generations in the outdoors.

Cameron Preservation Alliance



The Cameron Preservation Alliance is working towards the restoration of the parish's historic Sabine Pass Lighthouse which has been abandoned since 1952.



The Community Foundation of Southwest Louisiana

"connects people who care with causes that matter while enhancing the quality of life in Southwest Louisiana." Among many other regional efforts, the Community Foundation worked with Urban Design Associates to develop the **"Just Imagine SWLA" initiative**, a 50-year resilience master plan featuring 11 catalytic projects for Calcasieu and Cameron parishes.
